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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8531
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0575
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0719
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0315
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0208
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR PRIORITY 0009
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 0009
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0207

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000104

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G/TIP PASS TO MEGAN HALL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUN](#) [ELAB](#) [EZ](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS ENDING NORTH KOREAN LABORER PROGRAM BUT
CONTINUING CONTACT WITH THE DPRK

REF: A. 06 PRAGUE 1400
[1](#)B. 06 PRAGUE 1319
[1](#)C. 06 PRAGUE 420
[1](#)D. 06 PRAGUE 307
[1](#)E. 06 PRAGUE 266
[1](#)F. 06 PRAGUE 261

Classified By: Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Mike Dodman for reasons 1.4 b+d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) As a result of passage of UNSCR 1718, the Czech Foreign Ministry has pushed through an interministerial decision to end the North Korean work program that has been in place since 1998. No new visas will be issued, and the 408 DPRK laborers currently in country will leave when their visas and work permits expire, a process that will be complete by the end of 2007. The North Korean Embassy questioned the decision, but the DPRK Ambassador did not raise the issue during a recent dinner with MFA officials. The Czech government continues to consider humanitarian aid projects in the DPRK, including giving the North Koreans apple trees, and the DPRK regime has recently expressed an interest in sending a delegation to the Czech Republic to learn how to brew beer. The DPRK is likely to continue to press the Czechs for aid and the North Korean MFA Director of European Affairs is planning to visit Prague in March. End Summary.

Czechs End North Korean Laborer Program

[1](#)2. (SBU) News that the Czech government had decided to end its controversial North Korean worker program came in the form of a statement from the Ministry of Interior included in a story in the weekly newsmagazine Tyden entitled "Sew and Live in the Name of the Dear Leader." Citing UNSCR 1718, Tomas Haisman, Director of the Department of Asylum and Migration at the Ministry of Interior, stated that the MOI had informed the Foreign and Border Police to cease issuing work visas and permits for North Korean laborers. He stated that all 408 DPRK workers would depart the country when their existing permits expire, a process that would be complete by year end. The article highlighted the life of the laborers in the Czech Republic and noted that the laborers are forced to give a portion of their salary to the DPRK government. Haisman stated that "no one could convince us that the

salaries weren't going to fund the regime." Poloff spoke with Haisman on January 29 and he confirmed the information in the press report.

13. (C) On January 31, Political Economic Counselor met with Jan Fury, Director of the Asian and Pacific Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fury confirmed Haisman's statements, relaying that UNSCR 1718 provided the government the instrument they needed to close down the program. Fury stated that Deputy Foreign Minister Pojar, a long-time human rights champion, had pushed through the decision at the interministerial level late last year, and that the Ministries of Interior and Labor agreed with the decision. Fury said that while no Czech labor laws had been broken by the companies employing the North Koreans, the Czech government had refused to issue any new North Korean visas in the second half of 2006 and had in fact rejected 20 visa applications in November 2006.

14. (C) Fury explained that the Czechs chose not to directly notify the North Korean Embassy in Prague of the new decision but confirmed the policy change with the DPRK Embassy once the issue hit the press. When questioned, Fury informed the North Koreans that the Czech government had no choice under UNSCR 1718. Fury also noted that at a long-planned dinner hosted by the North Korean Ambassador on January 30, the issue, to his surprise, did not come up.

15. (C) Post has worked closely with senior officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labor and Interior on this issue in recent months (there have been no fewer than 16 separate meetings in the last six months alone, reftels). At these meetings we have been assured repeatedly that

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government officials at all levels have been instructed to be alert for signs that the DPRK workers want to request asylum or otherwise speak privately.

North Koreans Seeking Large Rabbits, Oversized Apples and Beer

16. (C) During his dinner with the DPRK Ambassador, Fury stated that he was forced to sit through a long rant on U.S. oppressiveness towards the North Korean regime. He said that the North Koreans raised the issue of a planned Czech humanitarian contribution of apple trees to the DPRK. Fury responded that the issue was on hold until the Czech Ambassador in Pyongyang visited the location where the trees would be planted and that during the winter he would not likely have that opportunity. (Note: MFA officials had earlier informed Poloff that the MFA had established the requirement of the Czech Ambassador's visit to better ensure that the DPRK military wouldn't be profiting from the apple trees. End Note.) The North Korean Ambassador mentioned to Fury that the DPRK is importing extremely large rabbits from a German farmer near the Czech border and wondered whether it would be possible to import trees that produce oversized apples. The North Koreans also explored the option of having a delegation visit the Czech Republic to learn how to brew beer. On a separate issue, Fury said that the North Korean Embassy has not raised the issue of missile defense since the United States announced its intention to build a missile defense radar facility in the Czech Republic.

17. (C) Discussing Czech-North Korean issues more broadly, Fury said that no change in policy is expected with the new Czech government. The GOCR will continue to support the six-party talks and condemn North Korean efforts to obtain nuclear weapons, but will also take advantage of its existing relatively cordial relations with Pyongyang to consider exchanges and humanitarian efforts that would support the North Korean people and ultimately promote civil society. Fury said that no high level visits are currently planned on either side, but noted that his counterpart in the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs may visit Prague in March

after attending a seminar on the Korean Peninsula in Italy. He also stated that the Czechs were exploring hosting an economics seminar in Prague for North Korean students.

18. (C) Fury relayed the willingness of the Czech Foreign Ministry to assist in any possible way in facilitating the resolution of current DPRK nuclear issue and solicited USG input on possible bilateral Czech-North Korean projects.

GRABER